

Christianity are those who have never thoroughly investigated the life and teachings of Christ. Some people seem to think that it takes an ignorant man to believe the Bible, but they have forgotten that St. Peter said, "Add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge." Not that knowledge which puffeth up, but that which increaseth wisdom. Roll away the stone of ignorance.

And lastly, there is the stone of worldliness which hinders so many of us from realizing the highest possibilities of spiritual life. Money, business, pleasures and other things of this world are allowed to take the place of greatest importance while behind this monstrous stone the spirit is buried. Roll away the stone of worldliness and there will come forth a new being, a resurrected man. Neither you nor I can afford to engage in any business which will bar the development of our highest natures. The soul is of eternal importance, and what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Jesus said, Take ye away the stone.

LITTLE LESSONS IN CHURCH WORK

G. W. RENCH

III. Church Letters.

A church letter is a written statement of one congregation to another recommending the bearer to fellowship. It is a means of protecting both the individual and the congregation. Unless this feature is preserved letter-granting is not only useless but harmful. My judgment and experience lead me to say that the following statements should guide us in granting letters:

1. No letter should be granted unless the applicant is in good standing. Some one will be imposed upon unless this is followed. Is it right for one congregation to deceive another? Will you sign your names to an untruth? What do you think of one congregation recommending some one to the fellowship of another just to rid their membership list of some rascal?

2. No letter should be granted unless the applicant is moving into the vicinity of some other congregation. I once heard a preacher say that he did not consider it any of his business what members wanted to do with their letters. Until our ministers make it their business to protect other congregations and protect those who desire letters, as well, we may expect to be humiliated by persons with their membership in their pocket! If there is some difficulty, the Book would require a settlement of it, not the granting of a church letter. I would refuse to grant a church letter when it would be wrong to do so just as readily as to refuse to grant something else that a member might wish.

3. Public announcement should be made of every application for a church letter. If there be objections to granting it, let the objections be given to the elders and deacons in a private way who will consider them, and if deemed sufficient, will refuse to grant it, but if not thought to be weighty enough they

will grant the letter. This method will give every needed precaution, but will avoid just such discussions taking place that are sapping many of our congregations of their spirituality and power. Unkind words in the business meetings, however, about anything should never be permitted. Such will kill any church.

4. Church letters to enable one to go into some other denomination should very seldom be granted. Just here I expect to hear of many, many protests. From the standpoint of theology this is an age of looseness—when everything goes. To refuse to endorse what is current in religion is to be the vilest sectarian. No difference if we are pledged to teach and practice the entire New Testament, making the New Testament church our model, if we do not pull down the lofty plea to a plane occupied by men without regard to Bible teaching, we are denominated the worst of bigots. I don't like to be called either a bigot or sectarian. But if pleading for a "common faith," as Peter speaks of it, heaps upon me such epithets let them come. I preach that faith, repentance, confession and baptism are for the remission of sins, that feet-washing, the Lord's supper and communion are ordinances in the church. I work hard to get people to believe this and I am not ready to destroy all my preaching by "recommending" that one or more of my converts identify themselves with a people who teach little or none of this. If these things are of God, as we teach, how dare we, without protest, recommend one who is leaving them. If it is essential that people receive these is it not essential that they continue in them? Neither the preacher nor deacons will receive one into our fellowship without these, yet by signing a letter they bid them God speed in leaving them. Is this consistent, loyal, or representing Christ properly? If I believed we could put these things on and off at will I would not teach them in the first place. To me this procedure is every thing else but "earnestly contending for the faith once delivered."

But some live far away from the influence of the Brethren, and coming in touch with a people who seem "nice," and have a "nice way" write to the church for a letter so that they can unite with some other church. What should be done? "Is it not better to be a member of some other church and working than to be doing nothing?" says one.

Well, I see no excuse for doing either, i. e., of going into some other church with the foolish pretext of having a "chance to work" or remaining idle. Where did the Ethiopian officer put his "letter" after Philip baptized him? Did he worry about a "church home?" Did Saul say to Ananias, "I would be baptized if you had a 'working church' here?" Did Lydia say to Paul, "Will you baptize us and leave us here without a church?" Did Paul say, "Why you've 'joined' the church and now you ought to be baptized?" Nonsense. These people needed

the remission of their sins. That was their crying need. That being accomplished there would arise no end of the ways of working for God.

If nothing else would do, however, I would write such persons a letter—in fact, two of them. One would read like this:

Goshen, Ind., May 17, 1901.

This is to certify that Mrs. Emma Dolittle is a member of the Brethren church of Goshen, Ind., in good standing, and as such we recommend her.

G. W. RENCH, Pastor,
Deacon,
Deacon.

I would have the clerk write the other one, and it would read like this:

Goshen, Ind., May 17, 1901.

Dear Sister Dolittle:—The church authorizes me to write to you concerning the enclosed letter the following message: It is with sadness that we send you the accompanying letter, thus dismissing you from our membership. If it were a mere matter of changing "church-homes" it would make but little difference. But do you realize that you are leaving out some of the plain commands of God by doing this? What will you do with the Bible teaching on baptism, the Lord's supper, and feet-washing? You have the light of the gospel on these, hence, in eternity, how will you answer God for not doing His will? Had you not better be brave like Paul, not being "ashamed of the gospel of Christ?" Hoping you may reconsider your decision and return this enclosed letter to us instead of presenting it to the other church, we remain your best friend.

By order of the church,

HENRY ROSE, Sec'y.

This will answer the question "What would you do?" It will be doing our duty toward keeping a soul loyal to God.

Goshen, Ind.

THE STRENUOUS LIFE

Text—John 9:4.

Z. T. LIVENGOD

By your permission, brother editor, I will write a "short" sermon for the EVANGELIST. I prefer as many readers as possible; hence the brevity of the sermon. Your uncle, who is now dead, used to say to me that he "liked a short sermon and a long piece of sausage." There are millions of persons, living, who are of the same opinion.

The text is the language of a strenuous life. Jesus' life was one of earnestness; exceedingly active, always doing something. He keenly felt that he had been sent; that he had a work to do; that there was a limited time in which to do that work.

From the scripture we safely conclude that every individual has a work to do; that the work to be done is given by the Lord, and that there is a sense in which no one else can do that work for you. Many today in blessed America are not doing the Master's work. Even sometimes in our own church and community are found those who are not engaged in the work God gave them. The American life is highly a strenuous life. We are quick to see, to take hold, to do, to catch on. We are a people possessing large discontent. We want to travel faster, receive news more rapidly, graduate at an ear-